

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ACDA-10 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-14
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-07 OES-07 DODE-00
ERDA-07 SS-15 SP-02 EA-09 /105 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:DKUX:RCM
APPROVED BY NEA/INS:DKUX
-----171016Z 107780 /21

R 162224Z JUN 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

UNCLAS STATE 140398

FOR SCHNEIDER FROM KUX

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:TECH, IN

SUBJECT: JAPANESE REPROCESSING

FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN JUNE 15, 1977 NEW YORK TIMES:

1. "U.S. AND JAPAN AGREE ON FORMULA FOR NUCLEAR PLANT" BY BERNARD GWERTZMAN. WASHINGTON, JUNE 14 -- THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN HAVE AGREED TO SEEK A FORMULA TO AVOID A CLASH OVER PRESIDENT CARTER'S NUCLEAR POLICY THAT JAPAN FEARS COULD SET BACK ITS PLANS TO BECOME SELF-RELIANT IN ATOMIC ENERGY.
2. AFTER TWO ROUNDS OF NEGOTIATIONS IN WASHINGTON, AMERICAN AND JAPANESE OFFICIALS SAID IN INTERVIEWS OVER THE LAST WEEK THAT THEY BELIEVED BOTH SIDES WERE EAGER TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE PROBLEM CAUSED BY MR. CARTER'S RESTRICTIVE POLICY AIMED AT PREVENTING ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES FROM HAVING THE

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- CAPACITY TO BUILD NUCLEAR WEAPONS QUICKLY.
3. THIS IS THE FIRST TEST CASE OF MR. CARTER'S POLICY, ENUNCIATED PUBLICLY ON APRIL 7, AND IT HAS CAUSED CONCERN IN BOTH WASHINGTON AND TOKYO BECAUSE, IF UNRESOLVED, IT COULD PRODUCE A BREACH IN RELATIONS.
 4. A AMERICAN DELEGATION WILL FLY TO TOKYO, PROBABLY EARLY NEXT WEEK, FOR TALKS ON A TECHNICAL FORMULA TO RESOLVE THE

ISSUE.

5. THE PROBLEM IS TO AGREE ON A REPROCESSING SYSTEM THAT WILL NOT YIELD PURE PLUTONIUM, WHICH COULD BE USED TO MAKE AN ATOMIC BOMB IN A FEW WEEKS. AMERICAN OFFICIALS SAID THEY BELIEVED THE JAPANESE WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT THE SO-CALLED "COPROCESSING" OR "PARTIAL COPROCESSING" METHOD, WHICH AVOIDS THE PRODUCTION OF PURE PLUTONIUM.

6. THE JAPANESE HAVE A REPROCESSING PLANT READY TO BEGIN OPERATION AT TOKAI-MURA, 85 MILES FROM TOKYO. IT WAS BUILT WITH FRENCH ASSISTANCE, BUT UNDER A NUCLEAR COOPERATION AGREEMENT THE UNITED STATES MUST CERTIFY THE "SAFE-GUARDABILITY" OF THE PLANT TO INSURE THAT THE END-PRODUCT CANNOT BE DIVERTED TO A NUCLEAR BOMB IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.

7. A FEW YEARS AGO, THE PLANT WOULD HAVE RECEIVED SUCH CERTIFICATION, AMERICAN OFFICIALS SAID. BUT NOW, WITH MORE AWARENESS OF THE SHORT TIME IN WHICH NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAN BE PRODUCED, THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT GIVE ITS APPROVAL TO THE PLANT AS IT STANDS NOW, THE OFFICIALS SAID.

8. AMERICAN OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD THE JAPANESE THAT UNDER MR. CARTER'S POLICY THEY MUST OPPOSE SUCH PLANTS EVEN THOUGH NO AMERICAN OFFICIAL BELIEVES THAT JAPAN WOULD SEEK NUCLEAR WEAPONS, GIVEN THE DOMESTIC OPPOSITION TO SUCH WEAPONS. TWO JAPANESE CITIES -- HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI -- ARE THE ONLY PLACES EVER TO SUFFER NUCLEAR ATTACK.

9. WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES CAN GO AHEAD WITH NUCLEAR REPROCESSING WITHOUT AMERICAN APPROVAL BECAUSE AN ACCORD SIGNED IN THE 1950'S WITH EURATOM, THE WEST EUROPEAN NUCLEAR GROUP, GAVE THE ORGANIZATION CONTROL OVER SAFE-UNCLASSIFIED

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GUARDS.

10. THE JAPANESE, WHO STARTED CONSTRUCTION OF THE \$200 MILLION FACILITY AT TOKAI-MURA ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO AS PART OF A PROGRAM TO RELY INCREASINGLY ON NUCLEAR POWER IN THE NEXT DECADES, PLAN TO USE THE PLUTONIUM IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF NUCLEAR REACTORS, KNOWN AS BREEDERS. THESE EFFICIENT REACTORS, WHICH PRODUCE MORE NUCLEAR FUEL THAN THEY CONSUME, SHOULD REDUCE JAPAN'S RELIANCE ON IMPORTED OIL AND URANIUM PROCESSED ABROAD.

11. THE FORD ADMINISTRATION LAST OCTOBER MADE THE FIRST BREAK IN POLICY THAT UP TO THEN HAD BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF PLUTONIUM-BASED BREEDERS. AND THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION ADOPTED AN EVEN MORE RESTRICTIVE POLICY.

12. ACCORDING TO JAPANESE AND AMERICAN OFFICIALS, THE NEW AMERICAN POLICY CAUSED ANXIETY IN TOKYO NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT THREATENED JAPAN'S NUCLEAR POLICY BUT BECAUSE IT RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIME MINISTER TAKEO FUKUDA'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE UNITED STATES.

13. WHEN MR. FUKUDA WAS HERE IN MARCH, THE NUCLEAR QUES-

TION DOMINATED THE TALKS WITH MR. CARTER AS THE JAPANESE LEADER URGED THAT THE UNITED STATES AVOID A RESTRICTIVE POLICY. TWO WEEKS LATER THE POLICY WAS ANNOUNCED.

14. THE MATTER WAS FURTHER COMPLICATED BECAUSE ON APRIL 7, IN A NEWS CONFERENCE OUTLINING THE POLICY, MR. CARTER MIS-SPOKE WHEN HE SAID "WE WOULD VERY LIKELY SEE A CONTINUATION OF REPROCESSING CAPABILITIES" IN JAPAN AND WEST GERMANY.

15. THIS LED THE JAPANESE TO PRESS, IN THE FIRST ROUND OF TALKS THAT BEGAN IN WASHINGTON THAT SAME DAY, FOR PERMISSION TO BEGIN THE REPROCESSING PLANT. THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS, WHICH ENDED 10 DAYS AGO, PRODUCED THE AGREEMENT FOR TECHNICAL TEAMS TO INVESTIGATE THE JAPANESE PLANT AND WRITE A REPORT ON HOW TO SOLVE THE QUESTION.

16. THE MOST PROMISING METHOD, IN THE AMERICAN VIEW, WOULD BE TO PROCESS THE SPENT FUEL IN WHAT IS CALLED THE "COPROCESSING" OR "PARTIAL COPROCESSING" MODE. INSTEAD OF PURE UNCLASSIFIED

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PLUTONIUM, IT YIELDS A PLUTONIUM-URANIUM MIXTURE THAT IS SUITABLE AS A NUCLEAR FUEL BUT NOT FOR WEAPONS USES.

17. AMERICAN OFFICIALS SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THIS METHOD WOULD BE COSTLY AND WOULD REQUIRE A DELAY IN PUTTING THE REPROCESSING PLANT INTO OPERATION. THE JAPANESE MAY ASK FOR PERMISSION TO TURN THE PLANT INTO A JOINT OPERATION TO PRODUCE A SMALL AMOUNT OF PLUTONIUM FOR THEIR EXPERIMENTAL BREEDER FACILITY WHILE INSTALLING NEEDED EQUIPMENT FOR THE SAFER TECHNIQUE. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, NUCLEAR COOPERATION PROGRAMS, NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE140398
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DKUX:RCM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: STATE
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Line Count: 148
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 57b67c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2120483
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JAPANESE REPROCESSING FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN JUNE 15, 1977 NEW YORK TIMES
TAGS: TECH, IN, JA, US
To: NEW DELHI
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/57b67c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009